



Photo: Martha Benedict

A PLACE CALLED THE ARROYO SECO

When a place is desirable, people like to be there. When a place is desirable people invest, they bring infrastructure and institutions designed to protect and enhance the desirable place.

The people create a community.

The community reflects the diversity of its inhabitants over time within a landscape that is recognized and familiar. They build neighborhoods, define communities and establish relationships. They identify with the place and call it their home.

Such is the place we call the Arroyo Seco.

This desirable place is physically defined by a river corridor, and emotionally defined by the individuals and groups who brought their ideas and aspirations to this much-admired landscape. The Arroyo Seco corridor is a concentration of visionary works of landscape architecture, planning and engineering, and social responses to need, opportunity and civic pride. These works and responses define the Arroyo Seco as a community and a corridor.

The tower of the Southwest Museum surveys the valley, its gentle hills and busy parkway. Neighborhoods and shops cluster along Figueroa, once the fabled course of Route 66. Elegant bridges arc over the Arroyo's waters and a high steel truss lifts travelers above the picturesque

scene in sleek transit cars. Children's voices echo off Arts and Crafts bungalows and rise up to meet sycamore canopies shading the quiet streets. Street connects to tree-lined street, neighborhood connects to charming neighborhood and business district connects to revitalized business district as the Arroyo Seco meanders from Pasadena to South Pasadena to Los Angeles.

It is a place of concentrations and contradictions. Water and people, light and color, speed and silence meet at this place. It is the heartbeat of a metropolitan region; the richest thread in an urban tapestry. It is a place of renewal and rebirth.

A place we call the Arroyo Seco.

Like all real places the Arroyo Seco has had its triumphs and losses. Change has brought prosperity, and prosperity has brought change. The parkway, once known as the hanging gardens of Los Angeles, no longer inspires affection and instills pride. The water and the parkway, which once bound the community together, now divide and limit the people. As before, the people are rethinking their community. The people are defining a new vision for the Arroyo Seco.

The character of this place, its landscape of distinction, helps channel individual efforts and civic commitments into a greater vision for the future. Such is the power of the Arroyo Seco, its landscape, light and setting, to inspire greater thoughts and higher purposes.